Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages | Commissariat aux langues officielles

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Federal government services in both official languages in Quebec, excluding the Montreal region: A very good situation overall

The Commissioner of Official Languages, Dr. Dyane Adam, today published a follow-up report on federal offices designated to offer services in both official languages in Quebec, outside of the Montreal region.

This report is one of a series of follow-ups that the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages carried out in each province and territory, in order to evaluate the progress achieved since a study undertaken in 1994 on the delivery of services in both official languages in designated federal offices. With this report, the Commissioner has completed the eleventh of a series of thirteen follow-up reports.

This latest report examined 30 federal offices designated to offer bilingual services outside the Montreal region. The federal offices in the region of Montreal were excluded from this report because the 1994 study indicated very good results for these offices, and our current knowledge of this region shows that the situation remains satisfactory.

The results of this study show that quality services in English are continuously offered at federal offices designated bilingual in Quebec, whether it be by telephone or in person.

The report indicates that exterior signs, documentation and forms are 100% bilingual and that interior signs are in both official languages 94% of the time. The availability of telephone service in both official languages remains at the same level as in 1994 at 96%. As for service in person in both official languages, it reached an excellent 100%, compared to 98.8% during our initial study in 1994. The strong two-language capability of most offices explains this very good performance.

The Commissioner declared that she is very pleased with these results and she congratulated the managers and employees of these offices for their performance. She also noted that the employees are well aware of their obligations to serve English-speaking clients in their language.

However, the Commissioner observes that the lack of active offer (the bilingual greeting on the telephone or in person) is still an area of concern. Although the use of a bilingual greeting on the telephone improved from 45% during the initial study in 1994 to 59% in the current study, it still remains insufficient. The bilingual greeting in person was used in only 18% of cases, compared to 16% in 1994. "The lack of a bilingual greeting in person or on the telephone by federal employees can only discourage English-speaking clients in Quebec from exercising their linguistic rights," pointed out the Commissioner. Dr. Adam feels that while this is a serious problem, it is one that can be easily remedied if managers ensure that employees follow the directives regarding active offer. She thus urges the federal institutions that were part of this audit to implement the commitments that they have made in response to the report in order to quickly correct the problems that were brought to light.

Over the coming weeks, the Commissioner will complete her series of follow-up studies by publishing

reports on the quality of federal services in both official languages by designated federal offices in British Columbia and Ontario. A summary report which will analyze the general situation across the country will be released in the coming months.

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